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HISTORICAL NOTES.

A REVIEW OF *The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis, Federalist*, BY SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON, PH. D. (HARV.), HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO., 1913.—This book is particularly interesting because it once again outlines the sharp changes in the political attitude of New England towards fundamental principles of the Constitution of the United States between its adoption in 1787 and the death of Mr. Otis in 1848.

The author has been very frank in his treatment of this subject, and has not hesitated to define clearly the attitude of the dominant party of his section towards both secession and nullification.

Those of us, who remember the discussions in 1860 as to whether the Southern States should secede by separate State action or by co-operative action, will be reminded that we did then but repeat the arguments propounded in New England between 1794 and 1815, at which latter date the movement culminated in the Hartford Convention.

Once again does this book remind us of Pickering's advocacy of secession (1803-1804), and of Josiah Quincy's unanswerable vindication of the same right, when he declared in Congress in 1811 that the admission of Louisiana would be "virtually a dissolution of the Union," and that it would be the duty of some of the States to prepare for a separation—"amicably if they can, violently if they must."

As to nullification, we read (Vol. II, page 12), that in 1809 the right of the State legislature of Massachusetts to nullify the Embargo and Force Acts "was freely asserted in terms scarcely differing from Calhoun's 'Exposition' of 1828." The passage by Kentucky and Virginia of resolutions nullifying the Alien and Sedition Acts, written by Jefferson and Madison respectively, is dealt with, but the nullification of the Constitution of the United States by no less than fourteen of the Northern States at a later date hardly falls within the scope of the book.

The chapters on the attitude of Otis to the question of slavery are quite interesting. When in 1800, John Rut-

ledge demanded that there should be thrown under the table a petition praying Congress to prepare the way for a general emancipation, Otis stated clearly his then opinion: "I think the subject ought not to be meddled with by the General Government, and, if any grievances exist, they are properly and only subjects of legislation in the several States."

The views of Otis on the efforts of Garrison and the abolitionists to incite servile insurrection induced him to speak out clearly in 1831, in Boston, against the assertion of a right to combine "to spread disaffection in other States, and poison the sweet fountains of domestic safety and comfort."

While stating clearly the opinions of Otis, even where at different times they varied, the biographer does not hesitate to express his own difference of view; but this is always done in such a way that the reader's mind is not led off to argumentative resentment, even though he would like to record a distinct dissent.

There are numerous pictures of the social life of the period, and perhaps a too free use is made of the word "aristocratic," which is without meaning in America. Here it is generally used to describe the man who has a better education and better manners than the majority, entirely without reference to his power in government. Yet, when as far back as 1804 "the aristocratic democrats of the South" are spoken of, it is easy to see how the word may be perverted into an unmeaning term of opprobrium when used objectively, or into an equally meaningless claim of superiority when used subjectively.

The book contains among others some interesting letters from John Rutledge, Benjamin F. Hunt, and Robert Y. Hayne, and much other material heretofore inaccessible.

This biography will be of value to every student of the period and of interest to readers generally. It should be in every library. (*Contributed by D. E. Huger Smith.*)